

# Australian Garden HISTORY

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AUSTRALIAN  
GARDEN  
HISTORY  
SOCIETY

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The Australian Garden History Society is the leader in concern for and conservation of significant cultural landscapes and historic gardens through committed, relevant and sustainable action.

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**Cover:** The grotto area at Yaralla, West Concord, in 2004. Constructed around 1890 by Italian artisans the grotto is one of the largest of its type in NSW and it evidences the landscape development of the estate. Its fabric is extremely fragile and is currently being restored. A number of the plants in the grotto are of scientific and botanical significance. The next Open Day at Yaralla will be held on Sunday 3 April. Phone (02) 9744 8528 for further details and bookings. Photo by Nina Crone



# RESEARCH & Researchers

## AGREEMENT ON MYSTERY PHOTO

Those who responded to Peter Watts' mystery photo were unanimous in their identification. Thank you to Ann Cassidy, John Hawker, Eleanor Leigh, Diana Renou and Volkhard Wehner, all from Victoria, and from NSW, Howard Tanner.

The garden is The Hermitage at Narbethong on the Black Spur. It belonged to photographer J.W. Lindt whose studio was the building on the left. Other photos of The Hermitage can be seen on the State Library of Victoria's website and those familiar with *The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens* know there is a later photograph of the garden illustrating Richard Aitken's entry describing the property (p.299), and Rowan Wilken mentions the tree houses favoured by Lindt (p.603). Dame Nellie Melba whose home Coombe Cottage lies on the Maroondah Highway (at Coldstream) was a frequent visitor to The Hermitage in its heyday.

The Victorian Branch of AGHS held several working bees at the Hermitage in the 1990s. Present owner, Amy Robson, was most interested in the photograph which she dates as c.1894. Amy is gathering information about the property, particularly the links she believes it

Far left: The gate to The Hermitage, on the Maroondah Highway, January 2005.

Above left: A rest house at The Hermitage, January 2005.

Second from left: The Hermitage, January 2005.

Above right: The Hermitage still has many walks through magnificent stands of tree ferns.

had with the evacuation of Melbourne CEGGS to Marysville during the Second World War. Further information from readers would be most welcome.

## STUDIES IN AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY

### VOLUME 2

#### CALL FOR PAPERS

Papers for Volume 2 of *Studies in Australian Garden History* are now requested. The Journal will again be refereed and initial proposals are sought at this stage.

1st May 2005 – Abstracts of no more than 500 words to be submitted.

1st June 2005 – Authors advised whether their proposed paper will be considered.

30th September 2005 – Submission of the full papers which will then be sent to referees.

Publication is expected in the first quarter of 2006. The general style will be similar to Volume 1 and guidelines for authors will be available from Max Bourke.

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# Gardening under Threat

BY WARWICK MAYNE-WILSON

Gardens are being squeezed out of existence by contemporary block-buster dwellings whose size has doubled over recent years while plot sizes have halved. Is the Australian birthright of owning a free-standing bungalow on a quarter-acre block surrounded by leafy gardens doomed to extinction? Will gardening as we have known it survive this and other pressures of modern living? To answer these questions let us examine why people have gardened throughout the ages.

## Why people garden

The most obvious reason was the need to grow food for survival, and possibly to sell or trade any surplus for profit. A body of horticultural science arose to help make plants grow better and more productively. Today people value home-grown fruit, vegetables and flower for their freshness, instant availability, and freedom from unwanted sprays and fertilizers.

Then many of us have the parenting and nurturing instinct – to experience the joys of getting things to grow from seed or cutting, to plant them out, and help and watch them grow and mature into beautiful or fruitful things.

Another reason is the desire to imitate nature, especially those elements which a person most loves and admires. For some, this simply means obtaining wildflowers (or

shrubs and trees) and taming them to grow more reliably in their gardens. For others, especially the Japanese, it means identifying those elements in nature which combine to produce a particularly aesthetically pleasing scene, and selecting and arranging them (often in a miniaturized form) in a highly disciplined way to represent or symbolize the essence of nature.

Related to the urge to nurture, some people enjoy the thrill of engagement and learning about the mysteries and complexities of nature – these days referred to as the environment, ecosystems and habitat. A hobby farmer's reforestation of degraded farm lands with native trees and shrubs and encouragement of native fauna is but one manifestation of this urge.

Some artists developed the habit of viewing and then depicting a landscape as a pictorial composition. With these examples in mind, a gardener with some artistic sensibility could contemplate how a favourite garden scene could be aesthetically improved, with a little help or rearrangement from enlightened man. This was the essence of the British landscape movement.

An extension of the desire to 're-arrange' or 'improve' nature is the urge to dominate it, and bend it to the human will. Hills are mounded up or flattened, streams dammed into lakes, whole forests planted or cut down.



The garden has been squeezed out as a surrounding for this block buster house. Photo: Warwick Mayne-Wilson.



More space but no real garden. Photo: Warwick Mayne-Wilson.

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McMansions with their footprint nearly covering the whole block leave scarcely any space for trees or garden plots.

Photo: Warwick Mayne-Wilson.

Even villages are removed or relocated. An extreme example of this was the creation of the grand gardens around the palace of Versailles for Louis XIV of France.

Associated with this is today's selecting out what does not fit within the current aesthetic – for example, the nurture of native bushland. Certain plants – and even animals – are declared noxious, and are ruthlessly culled or weeded out, as Professor Martin Jay recently pointed out in his lecture on 'violence in the garden'.<sup>1</sup>

### Memories, dreams and fantasies

Beyond all these are more subtle motivations to garden. In her book *The Inward Garden*<sup>2</sup> Julie Messervy explores the urge to re-create favourite scenes or memories from childhood. Such gardeners may seek to craft a garden that includes elements that hold positive emotional meaning from their life. Images or recollections of grandma's cottage garden, father's vegetable garden, auntie's wild garden or a neighbour's orchard may be so vivid that one feels compelled to emulate them in order to recapture the fond memories and emotions of those happy times.

Indeed, the desire to create a private – even fantasy – world of one's own, shaped to one's desire and furnished with one's favorite things is the essence of the paradise garden. These are usually courtyard gardens with high walls which exclude the outside world, places where one can relax, dream or fantasize – and even indulge in sensuous pleasures.

People with some artistic ambition, talent or training have an urge to create and experiment, combining plants and natural materials to achieve special atmospheric effects – swathes of colour, contrasts of texture, scents and perfumes, layering of plants, or bold sculptural statements. Brazilian landscape architect Burle Marx was a master of this.

A variant of this is a deliberate attempt to create romantic, or even fantasy settings. One often sees this at seaside resorts, with lush green lawns, copious palm trees, cute thatched cabanas, and glittering pools. But there were many earlier precedents, notably in the 'picturesque' aesthetic, expressed in Britain in the late 18th century. Here buildings were erected in carefully selected or contrived settings, which were embellished with specially arranged plantings to frame, conceal, then reveal them. Rustic or classical 'ruins' – such as those at Stowe, Stourhead or Studley Royal in Britain – were often added for special effect.

### 'Lifestyle' gardens

Since the 1950s, much gardening has already succumbed to influences emanating originally from California in the name of 'lifestyle' living, with a focus on recreational, entertaining and leisure facilities. Out went the orchards, vegetable patches, and flower beds, and in came the decks, pools and barbecues.

Today, innumerable DIY renovation and homemaker programs with consumerist advertising foster luxurious life-style images, and create rising expectations and demands for new products. Many seem to believe they must have one, or more, of everything advertised, in order to keep up with or surpass their friends and neighbours. Combined with persistent low interest rates, easy credit terms and high employment, this has engendered frenetic home-expansion activity, fuelled by a belief this will add value to a family's best investment in a period of constantly rising house prices.

Today 'McMansions', with their footprint nearly covering the whole block, leave scarcely any space for trees or garden plots, despite efforts by local Councils to ensure that a minimum area of land is kept for soft landscaping.

Another factor working against gardens is that population increases – especially in Sydney – combined with the finite land available in the metropolitan area and the desire of government to cluster housing in order to reduce infrastructure and development costs have all worked to reduce the size of allotments. Apartment blocks, townhouses, villa development and normal dwellings are being shoe-horned into smaller blocks. After decades

of living in garden suburbs, we seem to be heading back toward a variant of row housing.

Related to this is the overshadowing created by these new two storey homes. Built to within a metre of the side fences, the resultant two-metre chasm between the houses on either side is quite useless for gardening. Very short periods – or none – of sunlight, concentrated wind velocities, and reduced rainfall penetration make these narrow passages a very unfriendly environment for plants. So, another gardening space has disappeared.

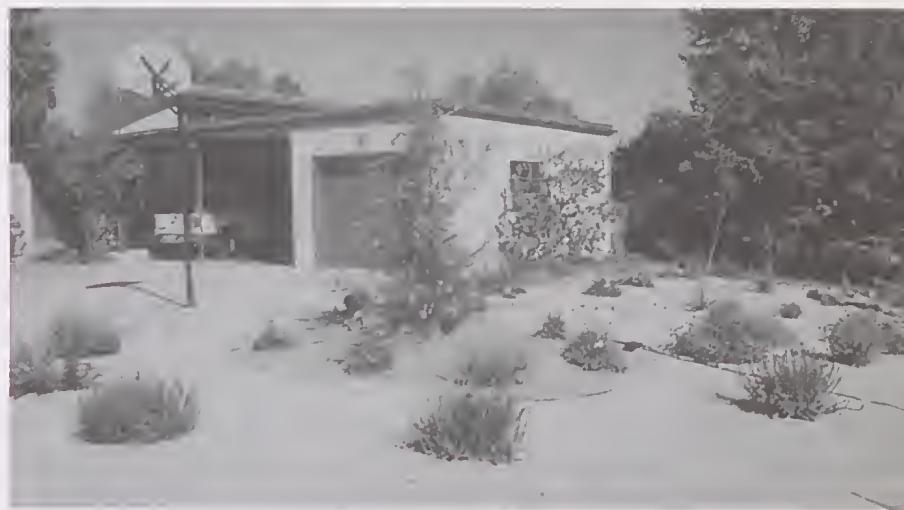
Worse still, in some cases the front yard is often paved over to accommodate two, three or four cars which any prosperous family in a new suburb considers a necessity. The backyard, smaller now than for the past century, is too often filled with patios, decks, and a swimming pool. Hardly any space is left for the type of gardening older Australians once knew – and practised. Trees, too, are unwelcome, unless in a distant neighbour's backyard.

## No time to garden

Pressures from incessant advertising and television shows have raised people's desires, but to be able to acquire the material elements for a better life style, *all* family members have to work – harder and longer. This is the most obvious contemporary pressure on families, but there is a more complex one. An important outcome of the feminist movement is that more women are well-educated, confident, and have entered the workforce in much greater numbers, moving into higher paid and more demanding jobs. But the majority are still mothers, and have to juggle work and family commitments – including driving their kids everywhere – as never before. Such women have no time for gardening, which is a great loss because women at home were often the one family member who had the time to plant and nurture the garden.

## A landscape architect's perceptions

Too stressed and with very little time for gardening, the majority of my clients specify 'low maintenance' gardens – simplistic in design, with a limited palette of hardy plants that can survive neglect. Very few clients have much interest in garden design, and even less in plant selection. Their main preoccupation is



to ensure they have enough room for their pool, their entertainment patio or deck, and their barbecue. By the time they get to the landscaping, they have usually blown their budget. The landscape plan is stripped down to the minimum. At best, a hardy lawn and a couple of token shrubs will be laid down – that's all.

Is this really gardening? Some will argue that at least such people recognize a need to have some plants present in their surrounds, even though they themselves do nothing to maintain or nurture them. They may derive a certain pleasure from such a garden's neatness, its sculptural form, its reliability. In many cases, though, there is no real engagement with the garden – no creativity, experimentation, plant selection, nurturing and certainly no refreshment or delight.

## Water restrictions

For some people the advent of water restrictions provides an additional excuse to 'give up' on maintaining a garden. Their conscience about letting it go is readily rationalized, and they no longer feel guilty. In many cases, the impact of the restrictions has led to reducing the palette of plants used – especially moisture-loving exotics, and there is now an emphasis on using native plants, and limiting or abolishing lawns. On a recent visit to New Mexico I was exposed to xeriscaping, in which lawns and moisture-loving exotics are replaced by pebbles or gravels, in which hardy native plants are placed sparingly, in the gardenesque manner. This can be quite attractive, but in some cases, it is reduced to zeroscaping!

With little time for gardening many people want low maintenance gardens, simplistic in design with a limited palette of hardy plants that can survive neglect. Is this really gardening?  
*Photo: Warwick Mayne-Wilson.*

'The Garden of Australian Dreams' like some contemporary garden designs relies on contrived geometric hard elements rather than on plant material.

Photo: Courtesy National Museum of Australia.



While some people place their hopes on greater use of native plants to survive the drought, few of these, apart from grevilleas for example, have been bred to the point where their forms and habits are reliable and predictable. The great majority of native plants have unpredictable forms, and do not take kindly to pruning or shaping, to the disappointment of aesthetically-minded landscape architects and their concerned clients many of whom have 'given up' on native plants and have taken refuge in the neat parterre garden with its predictably reliable box edging, exotic plants, and stone or gravel paths that maintenance teams can come in to clip and sweep monthly. This present fashion suits perfectly the stressed householder with no time to garden but who has at least a neat, bland, sculptural courtyard on hand.

To some extent, this is consonant with the modernist trend in architecture, which favours simple, clean, uncluttered lines and forms laid out geometrically. Some contemporary garden designs place much more reliance on contrived geometric hard elements and very little on plant material—a trend reflected in the changing covers of *Landscape Australia* magazine, and in the 'Garden of Australian Dreams' at the recently built National Museum in Canberra.

So, the forces currently operating against the survival of gardening as once we knew it are

legion. I am not optimistic they will fade or diminish. Rather, I suspect they will intensify, as buildings and paving spread like a coat of mail over more and more of our limited suburban land, squeezing out the space available for gardening. My concern is deepened because the environmental movement of the late 1960s and 70s seems to be weakening in its impact, and many younger people are succumbing to the seductions of a 'life-style' that emphasizes material goods and instant gratifications. Perhaps this forecast is unduly pessimistic.

## Some encouragement

Professor Helen Armstrong gave an encouraging paper to the recent Australian Garden History Conference in Sydney<sup>3</sup> about new gardens of hope. Perhaps the most impressive is 'The Eden Project' in Britain, consisting of three conservatories containing the plants of the key climatic zones of the world, showing both wild and productive flora. According to Helen, it is a high-tech working place, its huge biome gardens replicating our now fragile environment and acting as a gene-bank for the future, ensuring that representatives of our biomes will be available to us in perpetuity.

Helen also told of gardeners around the world who belong to Seed Saver Organisations. These gardeners grow plants from special or rare old seeds, harvesting the seed for ongoing propagation, thus ensuring future seed viability. One such organisation is the 'Seed-Savers Network for Australia and New Zealand', established by Jude and Michel Fanton in Byron Bay in 1987. These groups are accumulating seed banks of rare plants in case they are lost through natural disasters, indiscriminate forest clearing, and the limited palette of plants stocked by plant retailers.

On balance, I believe the urge to garden is so ingrained, so 'hard-wired' within many of us, that there will always be a band of dedicated gardeners who will keep the practice going. Not only is gardening about growing plants for survival; it offers opportunities for physical outlet, self-expression, refreshment, reflection, and sensual delight.

*Warwick Mayne-Wilson is a Sydney conservation landscape architect who fights tirelessly to save gardens and parks of value to the community.*

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Martin Jay, *No State of Grace: Violence in the Garden*, lecture given at Museum of Contemporary Art, Circular Quay, Sydney, on 12 August 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Julie Messervy, *The Inward Garden – Creating a Place of Beauty and Meaning*, Little, Brown & Co. Boston, MA & London, 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Helen Armstrong, *Gardens of Hope*, lecture given at 25th Annual National Conference of AGHS in Sydney on 16 October 2004.

# Excellent Work in Canberra

## A Loss – at the New National Rose Garden

Despite the advocacy of AGHS to retain some heritage features of the original garden, the new National Rose Garden at Old Parliament House, opened on 2 December 2004, has few direct links with the past garden. It is now a garden about history rather than a historic garden in its own right.

The Representatives Garden has two rose gardens, the Ladies Garden and the Macarthur Garden, and it also features a fountain and walk commemorating Women's Suffrage and the passing of The Commonwealth Franchise Act of 1902. The Senate Garden contains the Robert Broinowski Garden, commemorating the founder of the Parliament House Rose Gardens, and the Rex Hazlewood Garden, named in memory of a Sydney nurseryman and garden designer.

Max Bourke, who was involved with Old Parliament House and its original Rose Garden, stimulated healthy debate in Australian Garden History Vol. 15 No. 4 with his criticism of the new design and the removal of 'diseased' roses. Many of these have been sold to the public so some roses in private gardens will have an interesting provenance and it is hoped that this will be recorded.



## A Win – York Park Trees Saved

Fencing and notices indicate a change of heart by Commonwealth government authorities. This has brought a reprieve to the historic grove of oaks in York Park, a heritage precinct. Representations made by the local branch of AGHS together with other groups and individuals convinced the Department of Finance to change plans for re-siting the trees to allow for car parking. [See *Australian Garden History*, Vol. 16, No. 1, July/August 2004, p.24, 'Not the Spot for a Car Park'.] The local AGHS Branch was doubtful that lifting and moving mature oaks was possible and emphasized that the oak plantation was on the Commonwealth Register of the National Estate and that it should be protected. Now the area has been fenced to prevent illegal parking of vehicles and the Department of Finance is exploring alternatives which mean the trees do not have to be transplanted.



Above:  
Effective effort by concerned citizens including local AGHS members has stopped removal of the oaks in York Park and prevented illegal parking.  
Photo: Mox Bourke.

Below left:  
Pergolas and other garden constructions are debatable design features of the new National Rose Garden adjacent to Old Parliament House. The garden is now about history rather than being a historic garden in its own right.  
Photo: Mox Bourke.

## Ainslie Garden Booklet

The booklet *Early Ainslie Gardens* by Ann Somers outlines the history of five gardens of what were originally artisans' houses, built for early Canberra families in the Corroboree Park precinct of Ainslie, an inner Canberra suburb. The story has universal applications in its message that recording and documenting gardens of significance are essential before 'progress' rolls over them and they are obliterated forever. The booklet, costing \$16.50 is available from Jackie Courmadias (03) 9650 5043 or Toll Free 1800 678 446 and remember it can be also obtained through the secure AGHS web-site [www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au)

### EARLY AINSLIE GARDENS



Australian Garden History Society

# Friendship through Flowers

The Ipswich Horticultural Society

BY ELSPETH DOUGLAS



April 2002, Brian Person, President of the Ipswich Horticultural Society proudly displays the Banksian Medal which is given to horticultural societies that meet rigorous criteria. These societies can then award the medal to the exhibitor who earns the most points at a major show – in Ipswich's case the Spring Show.

From *Ipswich's Own*, April 2002.

The Ipswich Horticultural Society, the oldest in Queensland, has existed since 14 March 1866 when the Mayor of Ipswich, H.C. Williams M.L.A., convened a meeting 'to form a Society to be called the Ipswich Agricultural and Horticultural Society'.<sup>1</sup> A Provisional Committee drew up rules approved at a subsequent meeting. A Committee consisting of a President, eight Vice-Presidents, a Treasurer and Secretary, a Collector and seventeen Committee Members, all male and all well known citizens of Ipswich, was appointed.

## Early shows

The principal interest of the Society was to promote agriculture and this was demonstrated at its first Exhibition on 17 December 1868 in the School of Arts and the show yards in East Street. The day before there had been a ploughing match attended by Governor Blackall, at Booval. The Society's advertisement for the exhibition outlined the rules for bringing in displays – produce, implements and drygoods between 10 and 4 on the 15th and 16th, livestock in hutches and cages not later than 5 o'clock on the 16th, and small birds no later than 8 o'clock on the 17th. No horticultural classes were advertised. The same was true of the Cotton Show held the next year on 19 August along with a ploughing match and a Farmers Dinner in the evening. The Governor attended both Shows.

In 1869 the Society held its Second Yearly Exhibition. The schedule and a list of prizes with their value were published in the *Queensland Times* on 28 September. Of 97 Special Prizes six were for flowering plants, six for vegetables including 10s.6d for 'best 50 lbs sweet potatoes' and 10s 6d for 'best collection of vegetables from a cottage garden not exceeding half an acre'.<sup>2</sup> None of the Society's Prizes was offered for horticultural achievements.

These early shows, often irregular as a result of drought, demonstrated that growing plants in the new colony was essential, experimental, educative and often exciting. The 1878 show was the first after two drought years. Later, many agricultural and pastoral activities, particularly cotton growing, diminished in importance with the end of the American Civil War, the loss of markets and the increased demand for horticultural plants from the growing population. Gardeners were now able to grow ornamental plants successfully as well as fruit and vegetables. Most houses had tanks and often people could access water from small creeks and ponds. Manure was supplied by horses, poultry and other domestic animals. Nurseries stocked a surprising range of edible and ornamental plants. Gardeners were keen to display their horticultural skills by participating in competitions, exhibiting both familiar plants and many new species and varieties.

## Organisation

Agricultural and horticultural societies are intrinsically competitive. The Show with its many classes provides the arena in which the competitions can take place. Exhibitors aim for perfection as defined by the established Standards. Schedules are drawn up and entries have to be transported and arrive in perfect condition. Qualified judges, aided by the stewards, award the prizes. Their decisions cannot be challenged. Prizes and Trophies are presented. Several Ipswich members have won the prestigious Banksian Medal, only given to members of societies whose competition standards meet the criteria of the Royal Horticultural Society in Great Britain with which the Society is affiliated. The Medal is awarded to the competitor with the highest total points in the Autumn Show and cannot be won twice running.

The Ipswich and West Moreton Agricultural and Horticultural Society organised two major

shows in the nineteenth century – the Chrysanthemum Shows of April 1896 and April 1897. Held in the School of Arts, these logistic triumphs would have been impossible without the railways. In 1896 exhibitors were offered free return carriage of unsold plants, while 'Cut flowers in Cases or Hampers consigned to the Show are carried at half rates on the forward journey'<sup>3</sup> Unsold plants, if returned within the week to their station of origin, travelled free on production of a Certificate from the Secretary. Blooms came from as far as Maryborough and Hamilton (Brisbane). In 1897 District Exhibits were from Maryborough, New Farm and East Ipswich. Other plants were transported by

horse-drawn vehicles, by wheelbarrow or on foot. Keeping the plants in good condition must have been a major concern.

A special prize for the best kept gardens in Ipswich Electorate, as well as Blackstone, Bundamba [sic] and Dinmore Districts, was offered at the Show of 14 and 15 October 1897.

## Notable exhibitors and exhibits

The first Spring Show was held in 1903. It celebrated its centenary in 2003. After the 1903 Show, interest dwindled and it seemed the Society might close. Fortunately in 1912, Mr Turley, the Park Curator, organised the

Advertisement from the Queensland Times 16 February 1938, p. 2.

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Advertisement from the Queensland Times 21 May 1937, p. 8.

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TYZACK'S BAMBOO RAKES.  
SIZES: 2 ft. 6 in., 3 ft. 3 in., 3 ft. 6 in., 4 ft. 3 in., 5 ft. 3 in., 6 ft. 3 in., 7 ft. 3 in., 8 ft. 3 in., 9 ft. 3 in., 10 ft. 3 in., 11 ft. 3 in., 12 ft. 3 in., 13 ft. 3 in., 14 ft. 3 in., 15 ft. 3 in., 16 ft. 3 in., 17 ft. 3 in., 18 ft. 3 in., 19 ft. 3 in., 20 ft. 3 in., 21 ft. 3 in., 22 ft. 3 in., 23 ft. 3 in., 24 ft. 3 in., 25 ft. 3 in., 26 ft. 3 in., 27 ft. 3 in., 28 ft. 3 in., 29 ft. 3 in., 30 ft. 3 in., 31 ft. 3 in., 32 ft. 3 in., 33 ft. 3 in., 34 ft. 3 in., 35 ft. 3 in., 36 ft. 3 in., 37 ft. 3 in., 38 ft. 3 in., 39 ft. 3 in., 40 ft. 3 in., 41 ft. 3 in., 42 ft. 3 in., 43 ft. 3 in., 44 ft. 3 in., 45 ft. 3 in., 46 ft. 3 in., 47 ft. 3 in., 48 ft. 3 in., 49 ft. 3 in., 50 ft. 3 in., 51 ft. 3 in., 52 ft. 3 in., 53 ft. 3 in., 54 ft. 3 in., 55 ft. 3 in., 56 ft. 3 in., 57 ft. 3 in., 58 ft. 3 in., 59 ft. 3 in., 60 ft. 3 in., 61 ft. 3 in., 62 ft. 3 in., 63 ft. 3 in., 64 ft. 3 in., 65 ft. 3 in., 66 ft. 3 in., 67 ft. 3 in., 68 ft. 3 in., 69 ft. 3 in., 70 ft. 3 in., 71 ft. 3 in., 72 ft. 3 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7 May 1937, p. 8.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Queensland Times  
14/3/1866.

<sup>2</sup> Queensland Times  
28/9/1869.

<sup>3</sup> Queensland Times  
1896

<sup>4</sup> Schedule Ipswich  
Horticultural Dahlia  
Show 20 March 1948

<sup>5</sup> Queensland Times  
25/6/1904.

<sup>6</sup> Queensland Times  
25/6/1904.

<sup>7</sup> Dawn Jones quoted in  
*Friendship Through  
Flowers* (draft history  
of the Ipswich  
Horticultural Society by  
Margaret Cooke and  
Ian Pullar).

<sup>8</sup> Queensland Times  
17/3/1936.

<sup>9</sup> Queensland Times  
10/8/1937.

<sup>10</sup> Queensland Times  
30/8/1912.

separation of the Ipswich Horticultural Society from the Agricultural Society. There were approximately 66 members and Monthly Shows were held until 1914 when they became irregular. However in 1914, 1915 and 1916 there were special Sweet Pea Shows. Proceeds went to the war effort. A Chrysanthemum and Dahlia Show in April 1915 divided its proceeds between the Red Cross Fund and the Soldiers Comfort Fund. After the war monthly shows resumed and continue to the present. Another major Sweet Pea Show was held in the Ipswich Town Hall on 26 August 1927.

Big shows featuring particular plants continued to be staged for example 20 March 1948 saw the Dahlia Show in the Town Hall. There were 38 classes and two trophies – *Best PomPom Dahlia Trophy* and *Most Points Dahlia Trophy*. Classes for cut flowers, floral work and vegetables also attracted prizes, 2/6 and 1/- for *All Vases*, 3/6 and 2/- for *All Bowls*, 5/- and 2/6 for *All Decorative Baskets*, and 2/6 and 1/- for *Ladies Spray and Gents Buttonhole*.<sup>4</sup> The Autumn Show, now held under the cinemas in the Ipswich Mall, is called the Autumn and Dahlia Show.

The Society did not confine itself to its own exhibitions. At the Ipswich Show on 25 June 1904, several members won prizes for cut flowers and floral work. A 'non-competitive' exhibit sent by Mr A. Munro, curator of the Queen's Park' was much admired. 'It contained ferns, crotons, and many choice pot plants'.<sup>5</sup> An exhibit by the local nurseryman, Mr A. Butchart, attracted even more attention:

'Here delicate ferns and grasses were grouped with pot plants and cut flowers, showing off to advantage a horse shoe, a cushion, and an anchor designed from Cape flowers and roses by Mrs Butchart.'

In the 1970s the Society participated in combined shows with the Ipswich Orchid Society and in the Colour City Carnival. In the 1980s the Society had a three-day display in the Ipswich Centre and in the Royal Horticultural Society's Centenary Year Display at Mt Coot-tha. In 1988 and 2000 it took part in the Ipswich Floral & Craft Extravaganzas.

The Society's most important 'away event' was its participation in the Brisbane Exhibition from the late forties to 1994, competing in Exhibition Displays against other horticultural societies including Redland Bay and 'the Royal mob'. In

1951 it won first prize, which it was to do many times in subsequent years. Members thoroughly enjoyed creating these displays, meeting members of other societies and the fun that went with it. Dawn Jones, instrumental in organising the displays for many years, has said:

'I still feel that something is missing when it comes round to Ekka time, and the memories come back of the good fun we shared with all around us.'<sup>7</sup>

The society did not always exhibit as a society. Individual members Mrs H.E.R Goodwin and Mr J. E. Hastings won prizes at the Queensland Dahlia Society's Show in March 1936. Mrs Goodwin exhibited both the champion decorative dahlia and the grand champion dahlia, a new variety called 'The Golden Prince'. Mr Hastings won the C.W.Scott Cup for 'three yellow decoratives, one stiff-stemmed cactus, 12 vases of pompones, 6 vases (2), 3 vases (2) and 1 Vase (1)'.<sup>8</sup> Even more exciting was the success of Arthur Tucker, who bred his own special strain of gerberas on his return from the War in 1945. He won Grand Champion prizes with them in Ipswich, Brisbane and Sydney Shows.

### Educational and social activities

Horticultural societies are more than just flower shows. To show successfully the competitor has to know how to grow plants for exhibition. The Ipswich Horticultural Society describes itself as a 'learning club' and has a speaker at each monthly meeting. A wide variety of topics covering plants, horticultural practices and products are discussed and demonstrated. Earlier speakers included Mr T. Wall, Curator of Ipswich Parks who spoke on 'Bush-house Plants'<sup>9</sup> and Mr J. F. Bailey (Director of the Botanical Gardens Brisbane) who gave 'an interesting and entertaining lecture on flowers'<sup>10</sup> illustrated by a collection of lantern slides.

The Ipswich Horticultural Society is 'unashamedly social', organising bus trips to such delights as the Carnival of Flowers and the Garden Expo in Nambour. It ends its year with a Christmas Party, a concert, a present for everyone and a delicious afternoon tea. It definitely lives up to its motto *Friendship through Flowers*.

Elspeth Douglas is currently chair of the Queensland Branch of AGHS. She has lived and gardened in Ipswich for many years.

# Some Ipswich Gardens

BOOVAL HOUSE • COONEANA • ROCKTON

## BOOVAL HOUSE

By Helen Jackson

**B**uilt in the late 1850s Booval House was originally the homestead on a 310 acre (125.6ha) farm situated about 3 miles (5km) from Ipswich city as it was then. Now the house sits on 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> acres (0.5ha) in Ipswich. It is our family home and on weekends a venue for weddings!

Originally, animals grazed here and grain crops and citrus fruit were grown. Later, in the 1860s cotton was grown. The Queensland cotton industry developed during the American Civil War. (Today I have grown some cotton bushes from seeds collected from cotton plants: the same as those that would have been grown back then.). In the 1870s the farm reverted to food production again once the need for cotton diminished.

Unfortunately, none of the original trees remain on the property. A prominent heritage landscape architect has made a fairly extensive search, but can find no evidence. However, from a photo taken in the early 1900s, we know there were roses growing around the house and various shrubs or small trees scattered around the grounds.

When the house was bought by the Sisters of Mercy in the 1920s jacarandas and poincianas were planted on the western boundary and numerous mango trees are still growing and fruiting - causing quite a few problems with rotting fruit, and encouraging the flying foxes to make messes on the new driveway. Six very tall Queen Palms are also part of the 1920s



landscaping. A large croton, an Indian hawthorn and two rose bushes, one pink and one yellow, also remain. An acalypha hedge lines the western and northern boundaries. Unfortunately, we cannot buy the same species anymore, so we have had to propagate our own, quite successfully, to extend the hedging on all sides of the property and along the edge of the new circular driveway.

Since 1998, we have added a couple of advanced Hoop Pines which are common to this area, and a *Ficus benjamina*, as our future big trees. We have put hedging around the verandahs. We believe that a traditional *Buxus* or box hedge would have existed, but we opted for the miniature *Murraya* (Min-a-Min), as a quicker growing substitute. We have made cottage gardens at the front and western sides of the house, filled with old heritage roses, lavenders, day lilies, and gerberas the main plantings, interspersed with self-seeding perennials, bulbs and annuals.

We have added a large fountain, surrounded by agapanthus, and bordered by *Gardenia radicans*.

**Above:**  
View towards house with hoop pine (*Araucaria cunninghamii*) in foreground.

**Below Left:**  
View from second floor verandah looking NW. Giant Cocos (Queen) palms and old mango trees line the driveway. The old acalypha hedge is in the background and the new (newly propagated) lines the driveway. A couple of new hoop pines (*Araucaria cunninghamii*) have been planted. Graham Thomas roses are in the foreground.

**Below Middle:**  
View of summerhouse through poinciana (*Delonix regia*) and jacaranda trees.

**Below Right:**  
New brick wall constructed with late 1800s bricks. The old tank and monkey tail pump (still in working order) in the foreground.





**Above:**  
On the verandah at  
Cooneana c.1926 –  
Dorothy Davies (far left)  
and Elizabeth Cameron  
(seated).

The summerhouse is a popular addition for our garden weddings and at present we are having a heritage style brick wall constructed to make a walled garden to the south. We found the original footings of an old wall while digging up another garden. An orchid house has been built in the old style, also a sulky shed, complete with old sulkies and buggies. A fern house is still waiting on the drawing board!

Numerous urns and pots are filled with old fashioned plants, including geraniums and ivy. A garden of Graham Thomas roses is looking beautiful at present with lots of new growth. Another garden has Hybrid Teas and Floribunda roses, mainly for picking.

An old underground tank still exists and we use its water to irrigate our lawns and gardens. In days gone by there were many springs in the area but unfortunately, they have all dried up, and so we depend mainly on town water. We collect our roof water in tanks.

We have kept the 'bones' of the garden intact, but are filling the understorey with new plantings of old varieties. Some of the new plants being released today are a bit hard to resist!

*Through full sun and shade and her 'labor of love' Dorothy Davies has seen its garden to its rightful place in the history of Ipswich.*

**Below Left:**  
The vegetable garden at  
the back of Cooneana  
homestead c.1926.

**Below Middle:**  
The rose garden at  
Cooneana c. 1926.

**Below Right:**  
The garden at Cooneana  
c.1926 showing Dorothy  
Davies holding the horse  
and Elizabeth Cameron  
(nee Welsby) in the  
wheel chair.

*All photos of Cooneana from the Ipswich Historical Society by courtesy of the Davies family.*



## COONEANA

By Susan Martin

Cooneana Homestead, in the Ipswich District, was built for Samuel Pearson Welsby in 1868-69, with the original property holding 557 acres. The family came from England to the Moreton Bay Settlement on the *Fortitude* in 1849 and thence to Ipswich, a thriving depot town for the Darling Downs in those colonial days. Welsby became a prominent member of the community where he is remembered as a teacher, also a preacher, with a lengthy involvement on the School of Arts Committee.

The Welsbys had a long association with their home which continued until 1975 when Cooneana was sold. In 1997 the Ipswich City Council became its present owner. Mainly built from trees on the property, originally with a shingle roof, it has suffered the ravages of time with changes to its structure and to the garden which once spread over several acres, growing fruit trees and vegetables, crops and the garden flowers so loved by the early English settlers. The homestead became a district showplace which hosted garden parties and social functions, eagerly attended by many Ipswich residents. Further details of this colourful history are being sought by the Ipswich Historical Society which has set in place preservation plans for Cooneana. This restoration project is currently well under way.

It is Samuel Welsby's daughter, Elizabeth, with whom we associate much of the garden history of Cooneana. Marrying Charles Christopher Cameron in 1866, they took up residence there in 1869-70. A family of four children ensured that the house and garden became a lively, much loved place with Elizabeth in charge until her death. The reins were then taken over by her adopted granddaughter, Dorothy, who had married her cousin Oswald Davies.

The Davies family photographic collection, around the time of 1926, depicts a mature



garden which provided both functional and pleasurable areas. It is Elizabeth and Charles Cameron's influence which established the robust vegetable garden at the rear of the house and the fruiting citrus trees along the eastern side, no doubt adequately feeding the family at a time when there was limited commercial produce in the fledgling colony. The front circular drive with bordering pathways displayed decorative shrubs, flower-beds aglow with annuals and led to a lovely rose garden. One is struck by the utilitarianism of this garden where a pony is held by the young Dorothy, and a bird aviary together with the outhouse, adjoin the vegetable patch which simultaneously grows to the edge of the detached kitchen section.

Cooneana, a graceful home of its time, is built of timber in the low set, verandahed style so popular in Queensland, though with a simple form. It is well placed on high land, surrounded by the Australian bush and overlooking the creek where the waterholes provided a favourite afternoon swimming enjoyment. It takes its name from the Aboriginal lore in the area, believed to mean where *Ringtail Possum sits up*, indicating the immigrant Welsbys' delighted interest in this new place so far from their homeland.

The remnant garden exhibits a skeleton of a rich, past era: large bougainvilleas still line the front drive, a small white flowered dianella can be spied below Cooneana, with the delicate westringia evident beside the verandah where the family took tea, and the rice flower continues to bloom.

Whether or not the restoration can encompass a massing of the garden to its early glory is unsure. Nevertheless, the Ipswich Historical Society, led by an enthusiastic president, will continue to collect the stories of the earlier historical development of this important site.

Susan Martin is an active member of the Queen'sland Branch of AGHS.



## ROCKTON

By Jani Haenke & Angela Geertsma

Limestone Hill rises on the east of Ipswich's business centre, spread with the green of Queen's Park. Just beyond the park is Rockton (where we grew up, and where Angela still lives with her family.) In 1854 the original property was 7½ acres, but subdivisions have reduced it to the present 1¾ acres. For a city location this is still a large garden setting the house off well with its spaciousness and the encircling great old trees.

From correspondence and early photographs we know that there are survivors of early plantings in the many tall and spreading trees, most notably the fig trees, *Ficus microcarpa* and *F. benjamina*. A sad loss this year has been the death and removal of the hoop pine, *Araucaria cunninghamii*. The huge tulipwood, *Harpullia pendula*, with shady branches reaching to the ground, was, like all these trees, a wonderful location for childhood cubby-houses.

Three of the seven jacarandas, *Jacaranda mimosifolia*, were planted before 1890, and are over 20m in height and width. These are far in excess of the growth predicted in Harry Oakman's *Tropical and Subtropical Gardening* (9m) and in 500 *Popular Tropical Plants for Australian Gardens* (15m). Their branches are very heavy, but not strong, and now they need constant pruning to ensure their safety.



**Above:**  
Front of Rockton in 1930s with weeping fig on left, piccabeen and cabbage tree palms and umbrella trees.

**Below left:**  
Eastern aspect of house 1960 with mature hoop pine and weeping fig.

**Below middle:**  
Front drive in 1930s with bougainvillea on left, box hedges, tulipwood, piccabeen palms, ironbark gum, fig, and cabbage tree palm in centre of formal garden beds.

**Below right:**  
Rockton, a family house, 1987.



**Left:**  
1987 remodelling of jacaranda tree cubby.

**Right:**  
Pre-1900 photo of eastern aspect of Rockton, showing young jacarandas and hoop pine.



Our grandfather, M. William Haenke, bought Rockton in 1918, and set out geometrically-shaped, formal gardens close to three sides of the house, with our grandmother's croquet lawn on the north side. Shrubs in the formal garden beds included acalyphas, crotos, cordylines, russelia and ochna (yes, that weed). There were, too, roses, annuals, and rows of gerberas. For easier twenty-first century gardening, many of the garden beds have given place to grassed areas, and favoured plants are those which require little water or attention, such as bromeliads and hippeastrums.

Throughout the garden our grandfather planted mangoes, pawpaws, mulberries, custard apples and macadamias. Later our father added olives and avocadoes, while our mother loved her coffee bushes with their starry white flowers. Some less productive trees are presently being replaced by new species.

As the garden ages the large trees become massive, and caring for them is a major preoccupation and expense. In 2004 there have been severe storms, breaking branches of the fig trees, and bringing dead branches down into view in dangerous locations. Further

damage is then caused by a 40m high cherry-picker moving across lawns, beds and retaining walls to cut and remove storm debris. Tree pruning, removal and garden restoration are ongoing costs, but fortunately it is not every year that Angela estimates such activities costing \$7,000!

These great trees also create dense shade in much of the garden restricting what else can be grown, and absorbing much of the limited moisture available in years of drought. Everyone is overawed by them, however, and acknowledges that they shade and protect the house through long summers, while giving this garden its special character. Rockton would not be itself without its trees.

*Before retirement Jani Haenke was a librarian at Mt Stromlo Observatory. She now lives in Brisbane. Her sister Angela Geertsma continues to live at Rockton, after a teaching career at Ipswich GGS, and shares a love of the old family garden.*

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**Left:**  
Street frontage Oct. 2003, showing jacaranda, mango and mulberry trees in front of cabbage tree palm, dead hoop pine, fig, and piccabeen palms.

**Right:**  
Morning mist in driveway 2003, under tulipwood tree looking to palms, pampas grass and loquat tree in front of house.

**Below left:**  
Eastern verandah and morning sun, 2002.

**Below right:**  
Larger stretches of eastern lawn now without formal flower beds, 2001.



From  
*Coal Mines to Rain Forests*  
 - Lloyd Bird

BY GLENN COOKE

Ipswich has an extensive garden history as its development challenged Brisbane during the early years of settlement of the Moreton Bay District. It has been a major industrial centre for coal mining and manufacturing but clearing of the land for grazing and agriculture also contributed to loss of native vegetation.

Bundamba coal-miner Lloyd Bird has been in the forefront of the environmental movement in Ipswich for over forty years. Members of the Queensland Branch of AGHS visited his garden in July 2000. Our first sight of Bird's unique garden was quite amazing – in the distance we saw a modest Queensland cottage set at the foot of a small though towering rain forest. You can travel with a few steps from an open area (in Bird's case a small neatly kept lawn and garden) to the cool, gloomy interior of a rainforest. Some of the trees and vines, including some 40 endangered species, have reached 30 metres in height already and some will grow even higher.

There are several positive benefits in such a suburban garden – it requires no mowing and very little water, once the canopy is established. It does look a bit bare though, the tree ferns and cordylines which used to flourish cannot survive under the dense canopy.

Bird first came to wider prominence in Queensland in 1983 when he was awarded a Greening Australia merit certificate for his work in converting his back yard 'clay pit' into this luxuriant rainforest. If one expresses surprise that he should achieve such a reputation in the environmental movement his response is straightforward: 'When you work in an alien environment hundreds of feet underground you appreciate the sight of green trees and

fresh air!' Bird's interest in rainforests was sparked in his early childhood. During the 1930s he and his family holidayed at Surfers Paradise on the south Queensland coast where he was able to play on the beaches and in the rainforest remnants that adjoined them (and have since been overwhelmed by real-estate developments).

The property was a most unpromising site when Bird purchased the two blocks in 1958 for £200. The back block was the site of clay pit for a former brick works and the excavation was full of bricks and other rubbish. After clearing it out Bird planted fruit and ornamental trees but they did not thrive because of the shale base so he began looking for an alternative which would grow well in these rugged conditions. He started looking at local plants.

During the 1960s access to local plant material was very restricted but, luckily, he visited Albert Brett's farm at the headwaters of the Condamine where he was allowed to collect seed in the rainforest remnants. Bird brought in wheelbarrows full of leaf mould from the surrounding properties and gradually extended the plantings from the house all the way up the back. He has no interest in



Lloyd Bird with the rare native olive (*Notelaea lloydii*) which honours him and his work.

Remnants of the former brickworks which occupied the site meant tough work in preparing for a rain forest.

Left:  
Firebricks

Right:  
Convict bricks



'cultivating' plants. If one will not thrive he replaces it with another as there is such a vast range to select from. He observes: 'If you plant a tree in the right place it looks after itself. I go bush and see what conditions the plant likes'.

When Bird became involved with the Society for Growing Australian Plants in the early 1970s he came into contact with another prominent Ipswich naturalist Keith Williams helping him locate plants to photograph for his major publication *Native plants of Queensland*. A few years later he met John Wrigley, Curator of the Canberra Botanic Gardens from 1967 to 1981, who impressed on Bird the significance of his collecting interests as there were so many plants growing around West Moreton which hadn't been adequately documented.

Subsequently, when Bird knew he was going to work on the night shift he would gather specimens then take boxes of plant material to the Queensland Herbarium, Department of Primary Industries at Long Pocket to be identified. Over the years he has brought more than 3000 examples, 1300 of which have been included in the Queensland Herbarium's collection resulting in the identification of four new plants.

He has also been involved in major projects with the Herbarium. The World Wildlife Fund provided \$40 000 to document species in the remaining rainforest areas in South East Queensland. Bird and his group of fellow enthusiasts assessed 232 sites ranging from 2 to 20 hectares. Such was the significance of his contribution that he was recognised as a co-author of the Queensland Herbarium's 1991 publication *Vine Forest Plant Atlas for South-East Queensland*. In this process plants have

been identified which were thought to have gone extinct in the late nineteenth century. One of the species, *Pouteria eerwah*, was re-discovered on Mount Flinders, south of Ipswich. These plants have survived in the most inaccessible places: rocky outcrops, mountain sides and gullies. As over 83% of South East Queensland is already in private hands and with increasing population pressure in this area (the population is expected to increase to 3½ million in twenty years) these rainforest remnants are to be even more highly valued.

During his researches Bird has become familiar with the uses the Indigenous people made of the native plants. As knowledge of his expertise has broadened, a number of European pharmaceutical companies have requested him to send samples of plant material to test for possible medical applications. One of the trees involved, *Hernandia bivalvis*, was plentiful in rainforests along the Brisbane River but now it is endangered. Bird has forwarded material of *Sarcomelicope simplicifolia* and *Castanospermum australe* to a Seattle pharmaceutical company for cancer research. The agricultural industry has also benefited; amongst several instances, Bird forwarded seeds of the three native persimmons to the New Zealand Agricultural Department to experiment with hardy rootstock for the cultivated species.

Perhaps Bird's most significant achievement has been the preservation of the vestiges of the magnificent treescape of the Woogaroo Scrub, which once extended from Goodna on the Brisbane River upstream for 5km. All that is

left are remnants of riverine rainforest along the adjoining Opossum, Woogaroo and Mountain Creeks. Bird headed a team of volunteers who undertook the regeneration work which started in 1992. Removing weed such as camphor laurel and lantana (in places 4m deep) manually was the first priority. Plants provenanced to the local area were established with minimum care and watered once only at the time of planting. Thick mulch reduced water loss and provided weed control. Bird's principle of 'the right plant for the right place' seems to have been largely successful. In 1994, a devastating bushfire went through the area but walking through the area now, one would hardly guess the extent of the damage a decade ago. This area will now be preserved as part of a greenbelt, providing a wildlife corridor between the Brisbane River and bushland to the south. It was fitting for Geoff Goadby (President of the Society for Growing Australian Plants) to present Bird with Honorary Life Membership.

Through Bird's advocacy the Plunkett mallee (*Eucalyptus curtisii*) was adopted as the Ipswich City floral emblem in 1996. Because of the extractive industries and residential developments in Ipswich over the last century only small populations of this eucalypt remain in Southeast Queensland – three are in the Ipswich area. Acquiring land has helped assure its survival in the wild but as it is now available from council nurseries through the Ipswich City Council Free Plant Program its survival as a garden plant is guaranteed.

The development of the area has put pressure on even rarer species. Bird was honoured as the namesake of a previously unrecorded native olive *Notelaea lloydii* which was discovered in remnant bushland at Mt Crosby. It was also found at Dinmore but survival at this site was only temporary as mining activity encroached the area and buried the plants. Luckily a few years later a single specimen of the *Notelaea* was found adjacent to the fence line of the Cunningham Highway and further investigation revealed another eight plants on the roadside verges directly opposite. Bird himself identified an even rarer species of native olive on a Dinmore bypass which will



shortly be named *Notelaea ipsvicensis*. As these rare plants are members of the Oleaceae family, which includes the economically important olive and ornamental jasmines, the native species may in the future provide material for genetic manipulation.

Bird has made an outstanding commitment to the preservation of the environment in the Ipswich area. A modest man, he values the friendships with the people who share his passion and commitment more than any award – and over the years these have been numerous (Life Member of the Society for Growing Australian Plants, OAM, Queen's Birthday Honours List 1993, Ipswich City Council's Awards of Excellence and the Greening Australia Award 1997, the Queensland Spade and Shade Arbour Day Awards and the Centenary Medal 2003.) Bird, however, is unabashed in using the credibility these awards have provided to further the public's awareness of the enormous value of the dry rain-forests of Queensland.

*Glenn Cooke is Vice-Chair of the National Management Committee and a former Chairman of the Queensland Branch of AGHS.*

Rainforest

A amazing achievement – Lloyd Bird's rain forest has transformed a site previously characterised by rubble.

## Erratum

*Australian Garden History* Vol.16 No. 3, page 3. Ipswich was proclaimed a city on 1 December 1904, not 3 December as printed.

*Picconia excelsa*  
*Carissa spectabilis*  
*Pinus roxburghii*  
*Adhotoda vasica*  
*Epiphyllum spp*  
*Angophora floribunda*  
*Punica granatum*  
*Brachychiton populneum*  
*Lagerstroemia indica*  
*Rothmania globosa & Gardenia thunbergii*

# Correspondence on Colonial Plants

**S**tuart Read compiled a list of his favourite plants from last year's the post-conference tour and an e-mail correspondence ensued with Colleen Morris and John Hawker chipping in. This is what AGHS membership is all about.

Stuart Read on 29 October 2004:

1. *Picconia sp.*, (can't find species – it's barely in any of my plant books). A rare tree of the olive family, seen both on the back lawn at Camden Park, and on the north side lawn at Denholm Court – the only other one I've ever seen was pointed out by the redoubtable Jim Webb (ACT, Monaro & Riverina Branch) on the back 'garden front' of Cooma Cottage at Yass. Corky oak-like bark, shiny dark green pointed leaves... Now, an intriguing thought, given all three have similar size and butt diameters, is that all three stem (pardon the pun) from same stock, seed, etc.

*This plant generated quite an electronic discussion:*

Stuart Read on 31 October:

Found the species name – it's *Picconia excelsa* or *palo blanco*, an endangered tree of the olive family from the Canary Islands.

Colleen Morris on 2 November:

This one intrigues as its former name was *Olea excelsa* but this species name does not appear on early lists so must have been known by another name – I will look again tonight as it is obviously something that was around in the 19th century. In *Hortus Britannicus* (1830) Loudon describes it as having been introduced to Britain from Madeira in 1784. Curiously it is not listed in the Camden Park catalogues, or in any other of the known early and mid-19th

century NSW nursery catalogues. It may have been a later planting, or known here by an alternative name.

And again on 3 November:

*Picconia* gets rarer by the minute. It is not listed as growing in the Sydney Botanic Gardens in 1895 (looking for *Picconia excelsa*) and it is in not in plants listed in Nursery Catalogues in Victoria 1855-1889. Loudon's *Arboretum* (1838) discusses specimens which were growing outside in shelter, one in Ireland, in such a manner that it does not seem to have caught on as a garden plant in a big way in Britain. I guess the best way to find out how it got here would be to trawl Macarthur's manuscripts, but the most important thing is that there are two growing in western Sydney. Should AGHS propagate it to ensure its continuity?

John Hawker joins in on 3 November:

There are only a few *Picconia excelsa* in Victoria – 3 trees in the Royal Botanic Victoria's largest (Cir. 3.85m., Ht. 10.5m., Can. 15.7m. [1989],) and a single tree at Kamesburgh in Brighton.

I thought that Yaralla had a few remarkable trees. How common is *Maclura pomifera* (Osage Orange) in NSW? There was a very large and old tree near the dairy, also two *Scolopia brownii* (Gunstock Tree) and a *Geijera parviflora* (Wilga).

Stuart continues his list:

2. *Carissa spectabilis* (Natal Plum) – the 'mystery' prickly shrub in the carriage loop at Horsley – kept many of us guessing and hitting books for weeks. Perhaps the same species behind the book *The Great Hedge of India*. Gardenia-like single white spiraloid flowers, glossy dark leaves, twin-branched 'antler' spines.

3. *Pinus roxburghii* (Himalayan or Chir Pine) – interspersed with the Bunya Bunyas down Horsley's magnificent driveway avenue, and gracing the garden hilltop at Brownlow Hill. Also likely to have been supplied by Dr Nathaniel Wallich, Director of the Botanic Gardens in Calcutta, who was in correspondence with the Macleays (Brownlow Hill). Given Horsley's clear Indian links . . . a definite possibility, homesick companions?

My sketchy research suggests:

*Pinus roxburghii* (syn. *P. longifolia* ?) Hillier's *Manual of Trees & Shrubs* suggests *P. longifolia* = *P. roxburghii* & *P. palustris* (Southern Pitch Pine, USA) was introduced into England 1807. Hugh Johnson's *International Book of Trees* Introductory chart has a flood of Indian material hitting England from c.1800 on – funnily enough the first entry is *P. roxburghii*.

NSW – Craig Burton has it on a list from 1835 – source – Landscape Management Plan for University of Western Sydney, Parramatta, the former Female Orphan School.

Tasmania – Phyll Fraser Simons *Historic Gardens of Tasmania* notes Mr Gunn of Hobart had it in 1853 and the Botanic Gardens Hobart in 1857 (*P. longifolia*)

Victoria – J.J. Rule's 1857 list also has *P. longifolia*.

Late dates aren't they, given India's active trading dates 1820s-1830s according to Broadbent, Hughes et al. in the Museum of Sydney/Historic Houses Trust Exhibition in 2004? I guess Himalayan botanizing was very much a side-activity to spying in 'the Great Game of Empire'.

Colleen re-enters the discussion:

At the Sydney conference James Broadbent questioned whether the plants Hardy Wilson associated with colonial gardens were, in reality, available. Many of them were, but Winter Honeysuckle (*Lonicera fragrantissima*), so treasured by owners of old gardens and according to Paxton's *Botanical Dictionary* (1868) introduced into Britain from China in 1848, is curiously

absent from colonial NSW catalogues. So the gardens we imagine that existed in early colonial times differed, botanically, from our notions. In our mind's eye we can envisage links between the Chir Pine (*Pinus roxburghii*) in the garden at Brownlow Hill or Horsley with the Macleay or Weston links with India but Alexander Macleay who was in correspondence with Dr Nathaniel Wallich of the Calcutta Botanic Garden did not list it among his desiderata or receive a plant of this tree, then known as *Pinus longifolia* and first listed in Macarthur's 1843 catalogue. But romantic notions are fulfilled when we stand and appreciate the same mighty tree whose emerging form was captured by the hand of Conrad Martens in 1871. So this is one of my favourites too.

Back to Stuart:

4. *Adhatoda vasica* (Malabar Nut or Vasaka) at Brownlow Hill, out the back of the ruined aviary – again intriguing possibilities about how an Indian plant might just be growing in that garden! Apparently it is a powerful, natural medicinal drug, anti-spasmodic, used in Ayurvedic medicine in India for centuries.

Colleen adds:

This has enjoyed renewed interest in the past few years largely due to the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney. The plant's story is laced with the romanticism of the trade routes. Collected in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) it was sent by John Reeves, Chief Inspector of Tea for the East India Company at Canton, to Charles Fraser of the Sydney Botanic Gardens in 1828. Was the young plant of the Malabar Nut one of the 6 shrubs sent to Brownlow Hill from the Sydney Gardens in 1832 or among those sent two years later?

Stuart goes on:

5. *Epiphyllum ssp and cultivars* (Orchid Cacti) – the red, but especially the cream:

Both at Meadowvale, where the red was a knockout under an olive tree out the back, and more spectacularly at Ellenville, Mount Hunter, creeping through a tangled Cape Honeysuckle (*Tecomania capensis*)



#### COLLEEN MORRIS'S FAVOURITES

*Araucaria bidwillii* & *A. cunninghamii*

*Picconia excelsa*

*Pinus roxburghii*

*Lonicera fragrantissima*

*Epiphyllum spp.*

*Nolina recurvata* (syn. *Beaucarnea recurvata*)

*Punica granatum*

*Ceratonia siliqua*

*Ulmus parvifolia*

*Rothmania globosa* & *Gardenia thunbergii*

*Arbutus unedo*

*Brachychiton populneum*

*Phyllostachys nigra*



hedge, the riot of cream, red, and rusty orange blooms a standout – and the granddaddy clump of cream, northwest of the house.

6. *Angophora floribunda/A. subvelutina/A. x intermedia* (Rough Barked Apple or Apple Gum or Apple Oak) A feature throughout the Conference tours – on the Mulgoa Valley properties, and more at Brownlow Hill, Camden Park, Ellenville and Meadowvale. Ellenville's giant, near the river crossing, took my prize with a close second going a younger one at Fairlight (Mulgoa) in a grove near the garden wall where their Hardy Wilsonesque vertically hanging wobbly branches were elegantly 'draping' the lawns. Stunning.
7. *Punica granatum* (Pomegranate) – wondrous plants at The Lewers Bequest & Gallery with hundreds of carmine flowers; Brownlow Hill's 'Round House or Monk's Cottage' had a lovely one full of huge 'husks' where the parrots had stripped nearly every seed and left its vessel hanging, and at Horsley, tucked between the house and nearest outbuilding, with a chaser of Belgian honeysuckle (*Lonicera serotina* cv.) in cream and rose pink – sumptuous abundance!

Colleen agrees but adds one of her favourites:

Pomegranates were seductive and especially redolent of Australia's earliest gardens. The lovely double-flowered pomegranate we saw at the Lewers Bequest Garden had many wondering at what it was. Thomas Scott, Archdeacon of NSW, was responsible for the introduction of this form in the Sydney Botanic Gardens in 1824. At St Paul's Church at Cobitty the survival skills of an ancient Carob or St John's Bread, *Ceratonia siliqua*, its massive base sprouting the multiple trunks that tell of radical pruning, is a favourite of mine. The Australian Agricultural Company introduced this species to Sydney in 1827 but I enjoy its association with Thomas Hassall, the galloping parson, so known because of the distances he covered each week. Hassall almost certainly planted this tree and another, which collapsed just over five years ago, in the garden at Denbigh, Hassall's nearby estate.

Back to Stuart:

8. *Brachychiton populneum* (Kurrajong) gracing many gardens, from Yaralla in the inner west, out to Mulgoa and right down to Appin and the Cow Pastures – tough old birds with some style and laciness, their dappled shade, trusses of hanging pods like children's boats, and those lovely bell flowers, both plain cream, greenish and spotted with red as at Denham Court where the mixed native avenue was an inspiration.
9. *Lagerstroemia indica* (Crepe Myrtles) an under-appreciated tree, especially in the rain, having seen the beautiful ones at Horsley in the old carriage loop garden, arching traceries, no flowers needed (but what a summer bonus), their flaked, shiny, ginger, fawn and cream bark a standout.
10. *Rothmania globosa* and *Gardenia thunbergii* (Tree Gardenias) – both types at Camden Park tucked away in the lower garden – *Rothmania globosa* with its bluish citrine cream bells with upturned petals, strongly scented, and with green globe fruit, and *Gardenia thunbergii*, with long trumpet like-funnels and spiral 'frangipanis' at the end, swelling into hairy fruit, rather large, all over the bush. Again, strongly scented – quite the thing for the 'mixed border' of choice!

I could go on and on! No mention of Surinam cherries, strange blue things from South America, lochromas, and tiny scarlet Lapeirousias from south Africa, but I have already reached ten choices.

*Stuart Read is a heritage officer specialising in landscape with the NSW Heritage Office, and is a member of the National Management Committee of AGHS.*

*Colleen Morris is a heritage consultant with a particular interest in garden history. She is Chair of the NMC.*

*John Hawker is a horticulturist who works with Heritage Victoria. His special interest is conifers.*

# For the Bookshelf

## WILDFLOWERING: THE LIFE AND PLACES OF KATHLEEN McARTHUR

Margaret Somerville  
University of Queensland Press  
Brisbane, 2004  
ISBN 0 7022 3450 8  
RRP \$24.95

Reviewed by Lucy Barton

"Intimacy means knowing everything in its finest detail until everything is familiar, known, understood and at best, loved."  
(Kathleen McArthur)

Kathleen McArthur wanted all Australians to share in her intimate knowledge of the wildflowers of coastal Queensland. Her delicate and simple wildflower illustrations were designed to inspire a 'popular' as opposed to a technical knowledge of the wildflowers, and to fuel a desire for their protection and preservation.

In *Wildflowering*, Margaret Somerville paints an intimate portrait of the life and places of Kathleen McArthur (1915-2001). She reveals the fascinating but relatively unknown story of this remarkable Australian who was not only a wildflower artist but also an 'environmental educator, author, playwright, theatrical impresario, biologist, historian, business entrepreneur and conservationist'.

She does not tell McArthur's story chronologically but organises it by place. This structure aptly reveals the significance of landscape in McArthur's life. Rich descriptions of places such as Caloundra, Currimundi and Cooloola emerge as Somerville immerses herself in the world of coastal South-east Queensland. She explores these landscapes and discovers her own relationships with them, thus lending an extremely personal dimension to the story.

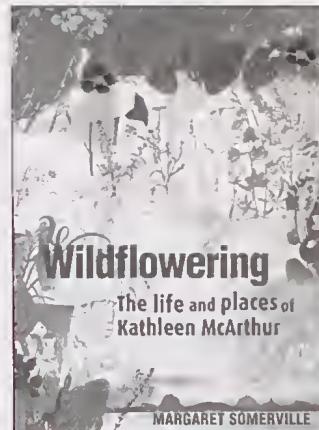
Somerville's descriptions of the Wallum country resonated strongly with me, having

my own personal connections with these landscapes. I grew up with Kathleen McArthur prints hanging on the walls and heard numerous stories of this wonderful artist and author who had been friends with my grandmother during the Second World War. They were both young mothers living at Caloundra while their husbands were away, and would spend many long days at the beach together with their children.

It was in the 1950s that McArthur's life took a dramatic change when challenging the conventions of the day she divorced and began to single-mindedly follow her destiny. She carried through her strong environmental beliefs into everyday practices in the home, eschewing consumerism, and leading a simple and frugal life devoted to the protection of native flora and fauna. Her creative mind is revealed in her paintings, printed cards, books and plays; her business mind in the marketing of her works to raise money to support her conservation campaigns and her scientific mind in her rigorous knowledge and detailed documentation of the changing ecosystems around her.

This biography provides fascinating insights into the successes, disappointments, struggles and wonderful friendships encountered by McArthur in her 40 years of work. There is a feeling of the frustrations McArthur experienced as a female at the forefront of the emerging environmental movement in Australia. This is balanced by the great joy revealed in Kathleen's wonderful friendship with the poet Judith Wright, their wonderful 'wildflowering' excursions and their creative work together as founding members (along with David Fleay) of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland.

Somerville writes with a strong female voice and it is fitting that an academic with interests in women and landscape should be the first to write in detail about the remarkable life of Kathleen McArthur. We



*continued page 22*

listen to Kathleen's stories from her Caloundra home, Midyim, and journey alongside Margaret Somerville as she explores and discovers these landscapes for herself. This journey will appeal not only to those with personal experience of these landscapes but to any Australian who shares a love of our coastal ecology. Somerville's account is ingenuous and highly introspective. It is intense and at

times I found myself wanting to return to Kathleen's story, not the author's. However, the skilful construction of the work by place, the abundant descriptions of landscape and Kathleen's fascinating life create a satisfying journey and one that is long overdue.

*Lucy Barton grew up in Brisbane and now works in the Picture Collection of the State Library of Victoria.*

## HERBARIUM

Robyn Stacey & Ashley Hay  
Cambridge University Press, 2004  
ISBN 0 5218 4277 8  
RRP \$79.95

*Reviewed by Nina Crone*

Whereas the general public can readily access libraries it is not so easy for them to walk into a herbarium, so an insight into the National Herbarium of New South Wales at the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney is very welcome. Ashley Hay describes the *hortus siccus* as 'the ideal garden in many ways, needing no weeding, no pruning, no fertilizing and defying seasons, climate, geography and even time itself' adding that 'botany would be impossible without this archive'.

As she showed in *Gum: the story of eucalypts and their champions* Hay has a singular ability to take a specialist subject and interpret it for the general reader, generating infectious enthusiasm for her theme. She introduces Robyn Stacey's

stunning photographs with a series of essays – Herbarium, History, The Field, Exploration, Women, For Hire, Science, The Hobby, Herbaria – each cleverly introduced by a pertinent plant classification.

From these an engaging cavalcade of plant collectors emerges – the well known: Caley, Brown, Leichhardt, Louisa Atkinson, William Macarthur, Ronald Gunn, Georgiana Molloy – and the lesser known: Amalie Dietrich, Copland King, Arthur Lucas and Montagu Rupp.

The design of the publication encourages the non-specialist: common names, rather than botanical names as captions for Robyn Stacey's exquisite photographs, primary sources cited unobtrusively and botanical notes, bibliography and index that will satisfy the most demanding scholar.

*Herbarium* is a wonderfully portable 'cabinet of curiosities', a brilliant example of that undervalued genre – essay writing. The photographs compel attention and the overall design is first-class. A 'must have' for everyone interested in Australian botany.

## Of Interest

### A WIN FOR ALL

Helen Page is delighted that the deal she arranged with Melbourne University Publishing to sell copies of *Clearings*, *Gardenesque* and *Green Fingers* has been an

all-round winner. AGHS members benefit from a competitive sale price, MUP finds a good market, and AGHS receives added income. Helen is thrilled with the National Management Committee's decision that the \$4,000 resulting from her work will go towards publication of the second volume of *Studies in Australian Garden History* in 2006. As the author of *Clearings*, Paul Fox, comments it is a case of 'words making more words'.

# Diary Dates

## ADVANCE NOTICE

October 14-16<sup>◊</sup>

Perth

'From Sea to Scarp' Annual National Conference at Novotel Langley Hotel in Adelaide Terrace.

## FEBRUARY

Saturday 26<sup>◊</sup>

Sydney

4pm-6pm: Illustrated Discussion 'Gardens in Historic and Public Spaces'. Speakers: Dr Nick Lomb, Ian Innes, Stuart Read at Sydney Observatory. An AGHS/Powerhouse Museum event. AGHS/Powerhouse members \$10 (non members \$12) Ticket includes entry to Sydney Observatory. To book phone (02) 9217 0485.

## MARCH

Saturday 5

Victoria, Kew

Twilight Jazz at Villa Alba, 44 Walmer St, Kew (Melway 44 H6). 6pm to 9pm, BYO tea and seating, tickets at gate \$15, children and students under 18 free.

Sunday 6

Victoria, Perry Bridge

Seminar: 'Saving the Strathfieldsaye Garden' at Strathfieldsaye Homestead (Disher Institute), Perry Bridge [Vicroads Map 99 F2] 9.30am-3.30pm. Registration: \$40 includes lunch, morning and afternoon tea. Bookings essential.

Friday 11<sup>◊</sup>

ACT/Monaro/Riverina, Yarralumla

Walk and Talk led by former director of ANBG, Dr Robert Boden.

Wednesday 16<sup>◊</sup>

Victoria, Melbourne

Working Bee at BishopsCourt. Contact: Helen Page (03) 9392 2260.

Monday 21<sup>◊</sup>

Victoria, Melbourne

'A walk round my garden' – by Richard Heathcote and Helen Botham at Como (Melway 2M D5). Gates open at 5.30pm for picnic tea followed by presentation at 7-8.30pm. Members \$15 (non-members \$20). Bookings essential. Contact Helen Botham (03) 9583 1114.

## STOP PRESS

Tuesday 29-Thursday 31

ACT at National Library of Australia – International Conference

'Desert Gardens: Waterless Lands & the Problem of Adaptation'.

Among the distinguished speakers are several AGHS members.

Further details [www.anu.edu.au/hrc/conferences](http://www.anu.edu.au/hrc/conferences)

Wednesday 20<sup>◊</sup>

Victoria, Melbourne

Working Bee at BishopsCourt.

Contact: Helen Page (03) 9392 2260.

Saturday 23 & Sunday 24

Sydney & Northern NSW, Blue Mountains

Collectors Plant Fair at Bilpin. For more information contact Silas Clifford-Smith on [sc cliff@bigpond.net.au](mailto:sc cliff@bigpond.net.au)

## MAY

Wednesday 4<sup>◊</sup>

ACT/Monaro/Riverina

Talks by Garden Writers 1: 'The Gap in the Hedge: the invisible boundaries of garden writing' by Christine Reid, garden writer for Country Style and Gardens Illustrated, and a member of the NMC.

Wednesday 18<sup>◊</sup>

ACT/Monaro/Riverina

Talks by Garden Writers 2: 'Making a Garden: Writing a Book'. Author Paul Fox discusses what was involved in writing *Clearings: six colonial gardeners and their landscapes*.

◊ Victoria, Melbourne

Working Bee at BishopsCourt. Contact: Helen Page (03) 9392 2260.

◊ indicates an activity organized by AGHS

# Mailbox

From Bali to the Editor:

Dear Madam,

In packing up my AGHS journals of the last few years in readiness to relocate to Australia after five years in Bali a thought occurred to me. Our membership has included some wonderfully erudite characters and the top professionals in all fields horticultural, architectural and historical. Let us not forget the regular members whose names may never head an article but who form the backbone of our society and without whom it would not be able to function. I'm not sure if she is a foundation member but I certainly know her from early conferences. I am thinking of Di Ellerton and her colleagues whose names quietly appear edition after edition as 'packers' of the Journal.

Thanks Di,  
Francis Walling

'Mimpi',  
Ubud, Bali, Indonesia

PS If any member desires an instant garden then move to the tropics – even our fence sprouted and grew 10 metres. And one can afford the luxury of several full time gardeners. I was very proud of our first pineapple.



## THANKS

Thanks to those who packed in November –  
Di Ellerton, Fran Faul, Jane Johnson, Beverley and John Joyce, Laura Lewis, Ann Rayment and Susan Reidy. Further recruits to the packing group are always welcome. Contact Jackie Courmadias (03) 9650 5043.

## THOMAS ROBERT NOEL LOTHIAN, OBE, NDH

1915 - 2004

Noel Lothian contributed to, if not inspired, a re-awakening to gardening in South Australia upon his appointment as Director of the Adelaide Botanic Garden. His years as director, from 1948-1980, witnessed a remarkable transformation of the Garden, the growth in a spirited public education program and advisory service, the reestablishment of the State Herbarium and a scientific program of plant collecting, the introduction of a professional training system for horticulturists, and the development of Wittunga and Mount Lofty Botanic Gardens. The latter was his most enduring monument – one that he passionately committed himself to, aided with a master plan prepared by Allan Correy.

Educated at Scotch College, Melbourne and Burnley Horticultural College, his father, through the Thomas Lothian publishing house in Melbourne, instilled a love of books in young Noel. With training at Melbourne City Council, principally in the Fitzroy Gardens, he worked at Kew and Munich botanic gardens between 1938-40 while completing further studies at Kew. He was on the last train out of Munich before the declaration of war. During the war he was placed in charge of several army farms in New Guinea before being appointed as senior lecturer in horticulture at Lincoln College in Christchurch, New Zealand. At Lincoln he became engaged at the Christchurch Botanic Garden, and established horticultural diploma and degree programs while completing the six-year National Diploma in Horticulture himself.

In 1948 he assumed the directorship of the Adelaide Botanic Garden and

set in train an extensive renovation and education program. The garden had deteriorated in the previous 25 years due to budgetary cuts notwithstanding the zeal of previous director Harold Greaves in maintaining the living collections. Noel became a champion for anything horticultural. He created a technical advisory service, re-established the herbarium and library, re-established an international seed exchange program, orchestrated a re-landscaping and renovation of the Adelaide garden and a restoration of Botanic Park, established a regional tree plantation system, encouraged an interest in heritage trees and gardens, pursued the development and planting of Mt Lofty Botanic Garden and expanded the Ashby-donated Wittunga Botanic Garden.

In his 'spare time' he wrote prolifically and was active in numerous associations and organisations. His publications included *The Practical Home Gardener* (1955), *Growing Australian Plants* (1964) with Ivan Holliday, and *Noel Lothian's Complete Australian Gardener* (1976). He served on the SA National Parks Commission and was known for advancing the growth of parks in the state, and he served as editor of the *South Australian Naturalist* for 22 years. In 1961, he was awarded the OBE for services to horticulture, and in 1975 was awarded the Veitch Memorial Gold Medal from the Royal Horticultural Society in London.

He passed away at his winter residence in Townsville in September 2004. The legacy of Lothian is his reinvigoration of the botanic gardens system in South Australia, and in particular his passion in developing the Mt Lofty Botanic Gardens as an extensive cool temperate garden to match the small Victorian-styled



Adelaide plains garden. Appropriately, a public memorial service was held in his honour on the woodland lawns of Mount Lofty Botanic Gardens in early October.

## CHRISTINE MICHELL

1916 - 2003

With the AGHS national conference in Adelaide in 1982 many members were introduced to Christine Michell's garden in Medindie in Adelaide. Designed and laid out by Edna Walling, with an accompanying large water colour plan for the garden, it destroyed the myth that Walling never visited and designed gardens in Adelaide. Upon her marriage to Howard Michell, the Michells set about designing a house with architect Frederick Milne, and Christine convinced Walling to venture across to Adelaide to prepare the garden design. Originally no sprinkler system was installed, so Christine 'spent her life watering the garden and shifting the extensive loads of sheep manure provided through the Michell business. The result was a beautiful design that reflects Walling's style in the 1940s including an s-shaped driveway, silver birches, a palette-shaped front lawn, typical under-planting species, and the beautiful horse-chestnut tree. While Christine passed away at Christmas 2003, she has ensured that the garden retains the intent and design of Walling, a respect carried forward by successive Michells.